

vaxxter.com

A website that regularly publishes false information about the safety of vaccines that has also posted false information about COVID-19.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Ownership and Financing

According to Vaxxter’s Facebook page, the site is owned by Dr. Sherri J. Tenpenny, an Ohio-based physician, through Choonadi, LLC, although this is not disclosed on the site. Tenpenny is a notable figure in the anti-vaccination movement, having published several books and frequently lecturing on the subject.

Vaxxter.com derives revenue from advertisements, affiliate marketing, and reader donations. The site also directs readers to “Dr. Tenpenny’s Store,” an e-commerce site selling supplements and anti-vaccine books.

Content

Vaxxter.com refers to itself on the homepage as “The ultimate guide to vaccine information, anti-pharma news, and more,” and states that it “promotes alternative health news.”

Content sections include Pharma News, Dr. Tenpenny’s Blog, Vaccine Politics, and OpEd - Guests. Articles often focus on national and international vaccine requirements and express concern over the safety of vaccines.

Typical articles have run under headlines such as “DNA, Vaccines, and Transhumanism,” “Informed Consent – Losing Ground in America,” and “Ebola: Ignoring Nutrition and Playing Politics.”

Credibility

Vaxxter.com has repeatedly published stories with false and misleading information about the safety of vaccines, and in 2020, the site published multiple articles promoting false and unsubstantiated claims about the COVID-19 virus.

Score: 30/100

-  Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
-  Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
-  Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
-  Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
-  Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
-  Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
-  Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
-  Reveals who’s in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
-  The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

For example, in an April 2020 article headlined “China Cures Coronavirus with Vitamin C; Research Suggests Selenium,” the site stated, “All across China, not just in Wuhan, but also in other cities that saw pneumonia cases (and note, Chinese medical teams discuss COVID-19 as pneumonia), people are being cured with vitamin C.”

While vitamin C supplementation is being studied in China as a treatment for the COVID-19 virus, but the claim that it can cure the virus is not supported by existing scientific evidence. The World Health Organization has said taking vitamin C is not an effective remedy for the virus.

John Calvin Jones, the article’s author, defended these claims in an April 2020 email to NewsGuard. “In my article, I cited references and embedded links to those researchers who use and have used high dose vitamin C as a remedy for a wide-range of ailments, including those related to respiratory distress and pneumonia,” Jones said.

Jones provided three references in the article to back the claim that vitamin C has cured COVID-19. Two of them were YouTube videos, one published in 2014 and another in 2017, years before the COVID-19 outbreak, showing medical practitioners promoting intravenous vitamin C treatments for other ailments. The other source was a proposed clinical trial in China scheduled to be completed in September 2020. At the time the article was posted, the trial had not begun and was still recruiting patients.

An April 2020 article, headlined “Is 5G a Deadly Trigger for the Coronavirus?,” suggested that 5G cell phone technology was linked to outbreaks of the new strain of coronavirus in Wuhan; China; Milan, Italy; and Iran, comparing the effects of 5G to starving the brain of oxygen. “That does stack up and explains the unusual scenes of Wuhan citizens dying literally in the streets,” the article stated. “They keel over dead, not shaking from a heart attack or seizure, never resuscitated. Milan

in Northern Italy is the 5G capital of Europe. Iran, where suspected millions have been infected, has installed 5G deployments.”

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic is connected to 5G, according to fact-checking articles published in 2020 by FullFact.org and Reuters. A March 2020 report from the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection, a German organization that studies the health effects of non-ionizing radiation such as radio waves, found no evidence that 5G exposure posed a risk to human health.

The site’s owner, Dr. Sherri J. Tenpenny, did not respond to two emails sent by NewsGuard in April 2020 seeking comment on this article.

An August 2019 story, headlined “BoJo Preaches Pro-Vaccine Mumbo Jumbo,” referred to pro-vaccine comments made by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The article stated that “Vaccines do not save lives,” citing data it said came from the U.S. Public Health Service.

However, NewsGuard could not independently locate such data, and other government reports have said that vaccines have saved millions of lives. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 400 to 500 people in the U.S. died annually from measles prior to the introduction of the vaccine in 1963, and that the disease was considered virtually eliminated in the U.S. by 2000. Despite a resurgence in confirmed cases — which many health experts say is in part the result of the anti-vaccine movement — the most recent case of measles resulting in a death occurred in 2015, according to the CDC. The agency estimates that between 2000 and 2017, 21.1 million lives were saved globally as a result of measles vaccinations.

The same Vaxxter.com article also stated that “vaccinated populations see more disease,” noting an increase in the number of children diagnosed with cancer in recent years. “Childhood cancer is now a

regular occurrence in the United States – and other nations with high vaccination rates,” the article stated, suggesting that vaccines are to blame for the increase.

However, there is no scientific evidence of a causal link between vaccines and cancer. Meantime, data from the CDC has shown the effectiveness of vaccines such as the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine in decreasing the incidence of the diseases they are intended to prevent.

A similar claim was made in another August 2019 article, titled “Is There a Link Between Vaccines & the Rise of Childhood Cancers?” The article stated that “The explosion of childhood cancers correlates with the increase in vaccination schedules for children during the 1990s up to today,” and argued that such a correlation proves that the vaccines caused those cancers. However, there is no evidence that vaccines are responsible for increases in childhood cancer rates.

The story also claimed that three types of adjuvants — substances added to vaccines to help accelerate the immune system’s response in producing antibodies — are toxic and can cause cancer. The story stated that formaldehyde, thimerosal, and aluminum “disrupt cellular metabolism and could quite possibly be responsible for the surging rate of childhood cancer.”

In fact, thimerosal has not been used in children’s vaccines since 2001, except in “some flu vaccines,” according to the CDC. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has said that “there is no evidence linking cancer to infrequent exposure to tiny amounts of formaldehyde via injection as occurs with vaccines,” and that “aluminum adjuvant-containing vaccines have a demonstrated safety profile of over six decades of use.”

A January 2019 article, headlined “Gardasil and Male Infertility,” stated that the human papillomaviruses (HPV) vaccine, also known as Gardasil, was approved for boys in 2009 not for any medical benefit but instead “to double market share and expand sales of the

vaccine.” No evidence was cited to back that claim. The article also stated that the “synergistic effect” of aluminum, sodium borate, and polysorbate 80 in the Gardasil vaccine “appears to be low sperm counts and infertility.”

Vaxxter.com has also published claims supporting the discredited belief that vaccines cause autism. For example, in an August 2019 story, the site referred to autism as “an injury linked to vaccinations.” Another August 2019 article asserted that vaccines can lead to “a long list of chronic disease[s] including autism, and can even cause death.”

The CDC and many other health and science authorities, including the U.K. National Health Service and the World Health Organization, have repeatedly stated that there is no link between vaccines and autism, based on an abundance of scientific evidence.

In a September 2019 email to NewsGuard, Tenpenny, the site’s founder and editor, defended the site’s content, stating, “we have worked hard over the last few years to research our content.” According to Tenpenny: “Our claims are NOT ‘misleading’ - they are backed by medical science that just doesn’t happen to be “popular” - I boldly stand behind what we have published. We at Vaxxter don’t talk ‘conspiracy theory’; we expose the body of literature that isn’t lockstep with blaringly loud, unchallenged mainstream uni-language about vaccines.”

Because Vaxxter.com has frequently published false and misleading health claims, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false information and that it does not gather and present information responsibly.

Headlines on the site generally reflect the content of articles and are not misleading. Articles that contain false or misleading information typically do not state those false claims in headlines.

Vaxxter.com describes itself as “a site that promotes alternative health news” on its homepage, but it does not disclose its anti-vaccine perspective. While the site has a section labeled OpEd - Guests, where opinion content is published, news stories also frequently include opinion.

For example, in a July 2018 story headlined “Human Subjects To Be Used In Cancer Vaccine Experiments,” the writer stated: “I can’t think of anything less I’d want to do than play the role of human subject in a vaccine experiment.”

Another story from July 2018, headlined, “Massive Vaccine Maker To Take Over LA Times Tomorrow,” included the statement, “The LA Times has largely been a dependable supporter of mandatory vaccines, which makes for a concerning future for a media outlet already considered to be progressively biased by most.”

These stories were published in the Pharma News section of the site, not in the OpEd - Guests section.

Because Vaxxter.com does not clearly disclose its anti-vaccination agenda and frequently publishes unlabeled opinion in news sections, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Vaxxter.com does not state a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find recent corrections on the site. Additionally, many stories with false information remain available on the site. Therefore, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not regularly correct or clarify errors.

Tenpenny did not respond to NewsGuard’s questions about the site’s handling of opinion and its approach to corrections.

Transparency

Choonadi, LLC, is identified as the owner of Vaxxter.com at the bottom of stories, under a section asking readers to “Support Vaxxter.” However,

Tenpenny is not identified as the owner of Choonadi or as the editor of the site.

Asked about the site's lack of disclosure about Tenpenny's role as owner and editor, Tenpenny told NewsGuard in a September 2019 email that "it's pretty clear that this site is associated with and owned by Dr. Sherri Tenpenny - I promote the site regularly through print and social media."

However, the promotion of a site on social media does not satisfy NewsGuard's standards for clear disclosure of ownership.

Stories on Vaxxter.com generally name the writer and include biographical information at the end of the article, which meets NewsGuard's standard for providing information about content creators. No individual contact information is provided.

History

Vaxxter.com was launched in 2015.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on April 20, 2020, with additional comment from one of the site's content creators. It was previously updated on April 17, 2020, to add examples of the site's coronavirus coverage and to reflect that the site now meets NewsGuard's standard for providing information about content creators. The criteria checklist has been adjusted accordingly.

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Edited by: [John Gregory](#), [Eric Efron](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and
Financing

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Content

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Credibility

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Transparency

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History

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